

Workbook Narrative I – Existing Conditions

Reference: Corresponds to Chapter II of Task Force Workbook

EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

A goal of the Coyote Valley Specific Plan is to create a compact and sustainable urban ecology that respects the existing natural environment, and where intervention is required, creates a built environment that actually enhances many of the Valley's ecological functions.

In order to provide the land planning team with the base information needed to work effectively, the City authorized environmental assessment to begin prior to the hiring of the land planning team. The consultants engaged for this effort included HMM for civil engineering and infrastructure, Lowney Associates for hazardous materials, Schaaf & Wheeler for hydrology, Engeo for geology and soils, Basin Research Associates for archaeology and historic resources, David J. Powers & Associates for land use, Wetlands Research & Associates for biology, and Hexagon for transportation. This team of consultants, known as Group 1, has provided maps and technical reports that form the basis of the land planning decision-making regarding environmental opportunities and concerns. These maps and documents were presented to the Task Force in the fall of 2003.

These reports can be summarized as covering:

Hydrology

- Coyote Creek
- North CVSP (Coyote Valley Research Park) Permitted Detention Plan. (Laguna Seca Storage Area)
- Fisher Creek natural watercourse south of Palm Avenue
- Ground water quality and recharge concerns
- Potential wetlands
- Streams and ponds

Cultural Resources

Historic and architectural resources that may qualify for National or State Registers:

- Ramelli House and Shed
- Hamlet of Coyote (Coyote Grange Hall and Coyote Depot Complex)
- Tom Sugishita House
- Thirteen additional sites are potentially eligible for National or State registers but need additional research
- Fisher Ranch: State Point of Historical Interest
- Lester Farm Warehouse: Eligible City of San Jose Historic Listing
- The Captain Pedro Fagus Trail: Expedition Route on National/California Registers

- Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail: National/California Registers
- El Camino Real: State Historic Landmark #784

Prehistoric Resources

- Six sites eligible for National/State Registers

Arboricultural Resources

- Eight sites are considered sensitive or of cultural value
- Keesling's Shade Trees, Santa Clara County, potential National Register
- Valley oaks, two locations, Santa Clara County and San Jose Heritage Trees
- Five sites with potential resources

Biological Assessment

Occurrences of Special Status Plants and Wildlife have been preliminarily documented for the Valley. Limited potential sites are identified within the CVSP area.

- California Tiger Salamander was identified in a pond south of the IBM campus and Bailey Avenue and another potential site.
- California Tiger Salamander was identified at the Coyote Creek Golf Course.
- Burrowing owls are possibly located within the CVSP area.

Geotechnical Evaluation

- Two City of San Jose potential Fault Hazard Zones are identified in the evaluation
- Coyote Fault Zone in the north end of the CVSP area along Highway 101
- Shannon Fault Zone running roughly east west near the IBM campus, and potentially across Mid-Coyote Valley

Hazardous Materials Evaluation

Numerous documented or observed sites are mapped, however, none of the sites are considered concerns.

Other Considerations

In addition to the environmental resources identified above, other existing site conditions and land use planning considerations will play a role in giving form to the urban and natural environment. Existing Conditions and Landscapes include wind/sun patterns, trail systems, transit rights-of-way, etc. These are mapped as Fixed Valley Elements. Included resources are:

- Wind/Sun patterns and influences
- Sensitive views and view corridors
- Protection of hills with no development on slopes over 15%

- Public open space corridors, e.g., parklands along Coyote Creek and Coyote Creek Golf Course
- Existing and proposed equestrian, bike and trail systems on a regional network
- Transit and highway system rights-of way
- Public and quasi-public land uses

The following maps highlight several of the key conditions from which a Coyote Valley Footprint will be crafted.

(See Maps in Workbook Section II. Environmental Footprint Formulation)

Existing Property Ownership

The Specific Plan process affords the unique opportunity to plan, at a detailed design level, a comprehensive and coherent urban plan across multiple properties under different ownerships. It is a process that, in essence, gives a municipality (San Jose), the opportunity to create specific neighborhoods or districts with the comprehensive level of planning and detail normally only possible within the Master Plans of large single ownership tracts.

But this opportunity carries with it a unique challenge and responsibility.

There are 292 properties and 262 individual ownerships within the North-and Mid-Coyote planning areas, and additional 287 individual ownerships within the South Coyote Valley Greenbelt Area. Property boundaries are pre-established in a random or, at best, expedient pattern. While, procedurally, property lines can be adjusted and unimproved land reasonably swapped to support a better urban plan, our experience has shown that each such transaction involves owner negotiations, differing opinions of value, and owner personality. Thus, in the crafting of a Specific Plan, the difficulty of deviating from property lines must be weighed against the value of an urban form that necessitates it.

Public lands within a Specific Plan for major road right-of-ways to schools, parks, environmental mitigation areas, transit corridors, etc. simply cannot fall on each property in the same proportion. Thus, an absolutely critical component of any Specific Plan is a financial program that fairly compensates for disproportionate distributions of burden and benefit. Preliminary work in formulating this financial program has been done by EPS (Economic & Planning Systems). With consensus on a conceptual urban design framework and land use plan, EPS can begin to fill in the details of these compensations within the overall Coyote Valley Specific Finance Plan. This will be a major effort in the work we project through the next 8-10 months.

The South Coyote Valley Urban Reserve area includes two pre-existing neighborhoods (Dougherty Rd. north of Laguna Avenue, and the area around Scheller and Lantz Drive). These neighborhoods, generally comprised of gracious estate homes on 2.5+ acre properties, have a much different character than the urban densities established in San Jose's General Plan. Our approach to these

neighborhoods has been to examine in detail how individual property owners can benefit financially from some subdivision while at the same time establishing transitional densities around them.

The Coyote Valley Greenbelt is intended to provide a permanent non-urban buffer between the Cities of San Jose and Morgan Hill. It carries agricultural zoning within Santa Clara County and is located outside of San Jose's Urban Growth Boundary.

The map that follows illustrates the current state of property subdivision within Coyote Valley.